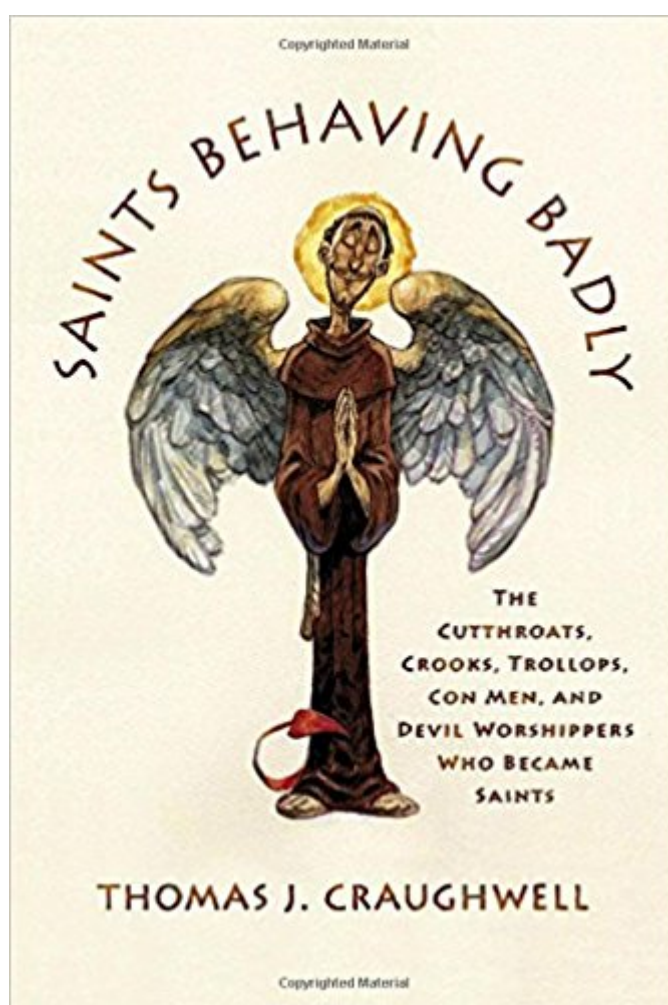


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Saints Behaving Badly: The Cutthroats, Crooks, Trollops, Con Men, And Devil-Worshippers Who Became Saints



Synopsis

Saints are not born, they are made. And many, as *Saints Behaving Badly* reveals, were made of very rough materials indeed. The first book to lay bare the less than saintly behavior of thirty-two venerated holy men and women, it presents the scandalous, spicy, and sleazy detours they took on the road to sainthood. In nineteenth- and twentieth-century writings about the lives of the saints, authors tended to go out of their way to sanitize their stories, often glossing over the more embarrassing cases with phrases such as, "he/she was once a great sinner." In the early centuries of the Church and throughout the Middle Ages, however, writers took a more candid and spirited approach to portraying the saints. Exploring sources from a wide range of periods and places, Thomas Craughwell discovered a veritable rogues gallery of sinners-turned-saint. There's St. Olga, who unleashed a bloodbath on her husband's assassins; St. Mary of Egypt, who trolled the streets looking for new sexual conquests; and Thomas Becket, who despite his vast riches refused to give his cloak to a man freezing to death in the street. Written with wit and respect (each profile ends with what inspired the saint to give up his or her wicked ways) and illustrated with amusing caricatures, *Saints Behaving Badly* will entertain, inform, and even inspire Catholic readers across America.

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Customer Reviews

The stories Catholics often hear about the saints can give the impression these people emerged from the womb with halos. Craughwell, a well-respected Catholic diocesan newspaper columnist, provides the rest of the story. His semi-irreverent collection assembles 29 sinners-cum-saints from

Christian history in an enjoyable and riveting account of their lives and times. The table of contents reads like a most-wanted list: thieves, embezzlers, murderers, cardsharps, and even a warmonger. Some, such as the apostle Matthew, a former tax collector, will be familiar to readers. The brief biographies of the more obscure saints, however, are often the most fascinating to read. Craughwell introduces us to intriguing figures like St. Moses the Ethiopian, a violent gang leader who embraced a life of fasting and prayer after seeking shelter with monks in the Egyptian desert in the fourth century. St. Alipius, a student of another notorious sinner, St. Augustine, was "obsessed with blood sports." Craughwell does not dilute his belief that it is only through divine grace that these women and men were able to overcome their self-centeredness and redirect their lives for a greater purpose. His tone is occasionally patronizing, but the take-home point is vital: while we are all sinners, there is always hope. (Sept. 19) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Saints aren't born they're made; out of, as Craughwell's sketches of 28 of them demonstrate, oh-so-imperfect human beings, some well-known--St. Augustine, St. Patrick, St. Columba, St. Thomas Becket, St. Francis of Assisi--many others not. They include all manner of thieves (St. Dismas), bigamists (St. Fabiola), egotists (St. Ignatius of Loyola), and even the occasional Viking conqueror (St. Olaf). Craughwell provides biographical detail and, of greater interest, discussion of how particular saints have appealed to a collective sense of right and wrong and notice of how some saints have entered pop culture in modern guise (such as the St. Dismas-like hero of the movie *The Hoodlum Priest*). The saint among these 28 whose story is the most moving is probably the Venerable Matt Talbot (1856-1925), a chronic alcoholic from Dublin who quit drinking cold turkey to pursue a truly saintly, humble life thereafter. June Sawyers Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

The title is a bit deceptive. This is actually a book about people who behaved badly and then went on to achieve sainthood, normally after a significant conversion experience. As an example, it gives a nice brief biography/hagiography of St. Augustine of Hippo, who before converting to his mother's Christianity (and going on to write not just his *Confessions* but also the Church-changing "The City of God"), led a remarkably loose life before settling down with just a single unmarried lover. The stories are enjoyably written, and give hope to some of us that just maybe we can become better people too. [I admit I'm running out of time...]Recommended.

I was hoping to have this book as bedside reading for awhile. However Craughwell's writing style is so engaging that I kept finding excuses to keep reading, and I finished the book over the course of just a few days. The saints featured in this book range from those that are well known such as St. Matthew and St. Francis, to those that are somewhat more obscure such as St. Genesius and St. Fabiola. The profiles are arranged chronologically. The stories vary widely, sometimes the saint's life was indeed very sinful and colorful, other times it was more a matter of small but persistent flaws which needed to be overcome. In many cases, Craughwell couched placed the saint in his or her historical context, and this really helps the reader to gain a fuller picture of the situation. Craughwell really makes these men and women come alive, and he makes them easy to relate to. Oftentimes people think that saints are rarefied individuals which are scarcely human, and that sanctity is something only a select few can aspire to. This book shows just how human the saints are and gives us hope that we can all aspire to follow in their footsteps towards the life of grace.

This book was a real hoot for me to read. I'm not Catholic, but I am Christian and enjoy learning about the Church in all ages. This book is full of stories of people who started out VERY BADLY in life and managed to end up being venerated by the Catholic church as saints. Of course, as I ponder life, I realize we all behave badly at times. That's why I'm a Christian -- I, too, need forgiveness. This book is a fun read.

Educational and well written book regarding the lives of God's Saints. I've grown to appreciate and regard the Saints in this book as the honest warriors and Holy people they truly became and are still today. Wonderful and inspiring, sad this book came to an end. Great reminder of spiritual warfare and the powerful intercession of God's saints and their protection for the human race.

So many people think of saints as people who somehow lived spiritual lives that we could never attain. This book demonstrates that many of the greatest saints were those individuals that struggled with the same problems and challenges as we do. It inspires the reader to not only examine these particular saints, but to reflect on how they overcame their challenges to be true witnesses to Christ. The chapters are concise and I found myself reading one of the narratives everytime I had a short break in my day.

Thomas Craughwell is simply one of the best authors in the U.S. Anything he writes reads so well that you can hardly put it down. He is also extremely accurate and knows his historical facts better

than most historians. This book is simply fascinating. It is great to give to anyone, Catholic or non-Catholic, as it basically defines what a saint is: not someone perfect throughout their life, but one who eventually attains it with the help of God's grace and perseverance. Craughwell doesn't hide anything, all the sins are exposed and in one case (in an era when bishops instead of the Pope proclaimed saints), the saintliness of a figure is doubted. But Craughwell is orthodox Catholic to the core, so one can even use this book in teaching catechism, there are no false teachings here. I recommend all of Thomas Craughwell's books, but this is his best. If this doesn't fulfill your hunger for saint biographies, get one of his other extended books on saints.

Thomas J. Craughwell must have enjoyed doing the research for this book, because he made the people that he told about just like you and me. He in a timely manner began to tell of those saints who in the earlier part of their lives were notorious for wrong doing such as St. Moses the Egyptian who was a Gang Leader and a Cutthroat until was befriended by monks and began a new life. The anti-pope St. Hippolytus was unique in that he would not give up his claim to the Holy See until he was sent to hard labor in Sardinia. St. Thomas a'Becket was shown in his original life before his troubles with Henry II as a somewhat wicked and selfish man. Saints go from the early history of the Church until the 1920's with the life of the Venerable Matt Talbot who was for many years was an alcoholic. The book makes one want to inquire about the saints and to realize that we can if we choose become part of the elect.

It was an interesting read if you like history or have an interest in early Catholicism. I'm not much into religion, but do enjoy most facets of history so did find this book interesting. Just a collection of brief biographies and well documented at the end. The world is made up of some interesting characters as is obvious here.

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